

CHAPTER VI

1 HE accession of Andrew Johnson to the presidency at first made no change in the character and tone of his utterances concerning the treatment to be meted out to the rebels. The burden of his speech was at Washington, as it had been, during the war, at Nashville, that "arson was a crime, that robbery was a crime, that murder was a crime, and that treason was a crime worse than all; that this crime of treason must be made odious and properly punished; that the principal traitors should be hanged and the rest at least impoverished/⁹ by which he meant, as on some occasion he said himself, that their large plantations must be taken from them and sold in small parcels to farmers/ In fact, there seemed to be reason to apprehend, and it was actually apprehended by many, that under the Andrew Johnson regime the country would have to pass through a disgraceful period of "bloody assizes" before proceeding with the task of rebuilding the political and social structure of the South. In the conversations I had with him, and still more in the conferences he had with some public men of importance, he threw out, indeed, certain hints as to his willingness that the colored people should have some part in the reconstruction of their States, but those hints were too vague to give a clear indication of his purposes. They betrayed rather an unsettled state of mind. There was much surprise, therefore, when on the 29th of

May, 1865, two executive proclamations
appeared, one of
which, a proclamation of pardon and amnesty,
put an end to